

WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) today voted in favor of two important bills that would move our country closer to bringing our troops home from policing the civil war in Iraq and refocus our military and intelligence resources on the real threat to our national security: al-Qaeda.

The first bill, H.R. 2237, would require the redeployment of U.S. troops and defense contractors out of Iraq beginning within 90 days of enactment and to be completed within 180 days. These forces, or a portion thereof, could then be redirected to Afghanistan to finish off the resurgent al-Qaeda fighters and to pursue the al-Qaeda leadership along the Afghan-Pakistan border. Unfortunately, this bill was defeated 171-255.

“Our troops have done all that has been asked of them in Iraq. They won the war. They defeated Saddam Hussein and his allies.

There is no threat from weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

There is no reason for our troops to continue to be stuck in the middle of a civil war in Iraq in which they are under attack by two sides of the three-sided civil war.

It is time for our troops to come home with the honor they have earned, a goal I will continue working to achieve,” said DeFazio.

The second bill, H.R. 2206, provides the President with funding to continue the war only through July 2007. It then requires the President to report by July 13, 2007 on progress (or lack thereof) on achieving a variety of specific benchmarks and goals in Iraq.

After receiving the report, the House would be guaranteed two additional votes in July on whether or not to redeploy U.S. troops out of Iraq.

The first vote would be on an amendment to require the redeployment of U.S. troops to begin within six months.

The second vote would be on whether or not to release additional money to fund the war through September 2007.

H.R. 2206 was approved 221-205.

"Congress is sending the important message that the President's open-ended, stay-the-course, status quo policy in Iraq will not continue. Being confronted with the reality of a U.S. withdrawal should force Iraqi factions to reach the political compromises necessary to move their country forward and begin to end the mindless sectarian strife," DeFazio said. "If not, there is no reason to prolong the U.S. involvement in Iraq if we want a stable country more than the Iraqi people and their elected leaders do."

"The Iraqi people have repeatedly indicated their support for a U.S. withdrawal. A majority of the American people want U.S. troops to leave.

And the Iraqi parliament is reportedly weighing a resolution calling for a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

It seems that only the President, his allies in Congress, and the leaders of al-Qaeda and Iran want the U.S. to remain mired in the civil war in Iraq, which is sapping our military and diplomatic strength," DeFazio warned.

DeFazio continued, "The president and his allies justify the continuing U.S. presence in Iraq by trotting out the tired phrase that if we don't fight there, we'll have to fight here at home. However, the Iraqi Sunnis and Shias, who combined make up the vast bulk of the insurgents and militias committing violence in Iraq, just want U.S. military forces out of their own country. They have no capability to attack Americans here at home."

"It is also misleading to say that if the U.S. leaves, Osama bin Laden will take control and have a safe haven in Iraq. There is no chance that the Shia and the Kurds, who represent around 80 percent of Iraq's population, will allow foreign terrorist elements to take control of the country. Even the majority of Sunnis have grown tired of foreign terrorists operating in Iraq and are fighting back," DeFazio concluded.

The Senate will now consider its version of H.R. 2206. And then the House and Senate will negotiate a final version of the bill to be sent to the President for his signature into law or veto.